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ABSTRACT

Noting that there are a number of methods exist for dealing with people who have trouble communicating readily or well, this workshop document reviews developments in the field of communication apprehension (CA) in recent years and points out resources that provide specific details for those interested in providing instructional answers to CA at the college level. The first section lists definitions used by CA researchers (such as willingness to communicate, rhetorical sensitivity, and writer's block), while the second section delineates the scope of the CA problem as encompassing up to 20 percent of the college population. The third section discusses different approaches to CA--which are divided into approaches with anxiety-based definitions and those with skills-based definitions, and claims that very little is actually being done to alleviate the difficulties of those with CA. Covered in the fourth section are applications of CA research that pertain to introductory college courses, including training educators to deal with CA in the classroom, individualized treatment for individuals identified as suffering from CA, special groups (such as English as a second language students), and modifications of basic communication classes to assist students with CA. Following the conclusion is a nine page list of resources. (SKC)

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New Approaches to Communication Apprehension in the Basic Course

John McKiernan

This paper is a summary of a workshop presented at the W.S.C.A. Basic Course Conference, Salt Lake City, Utah, on February 14, 1987. It reviews recent research on communication apprehension and related concepts, suggesting attitudes and approaches which may be relevant to a basic course in communication and sources to consult for specific information. Portions of the paper are adapted from an earlier paper presented at the 1984 Central States Speech Communication Association convention, Chicago, Illinois. When writing, Mr. McKiernan was an instructor in the Department of Communication at the University of Colorado, Boulder. He is now an assistant professor of Communication at the University of South Dakota, Vermillion, SD 57069.

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New Approaches to Communication Apprehension in the Basic Course

The news that some individuals do not communicate readily or well is not surprising. Most academic research supports the findings of the more popular Bruskin survey that about forty percent of the population report a fear of public speaking (Work). Nor is it a surprise that a number of methods are available to deal with the reluctance or inability, as instructors have sought to provide some relief for their students.

This paper grew out of my interest in developing an intensive instruction program for speech to parallel existing Writing and Reading Labs in the University of Iowa's Rhetoric Program. Knowing that I wanted academic program equality, I began to develop a case to justify the program, considering expressed needs of teachers in the program, reviewing the literature on personalized speech instruction, and talking with others around the country who had developed special programs of speech instruction. The results of that investigation are in an earlier paper delivered at the 1984 Central States Speech Association convention and in a co-authored paper (with Roseann Mandziuk) given at the Iowa State Speech Convention in 1984. The process of development and three semesters of working in the Lab, filtered by some reconsideration and re-reading the literature leads me to the contents of this paper. While appreciative of the experience, I want to stress that these views do not necessarily represent the current practices or attitudes of the University of Iowa's Rhetoric Program or the University of Colorado. While I appreciate their support and have benefitted from the comments of individuals within those programs, the contents of this paper reflect only my opinions.

In this workshop document, I review developments of recent years, primarily pointing to resources which will provide more specific details for those interested in providing some sort of instructional answer to the problems of communication apprehension (often referred to in this paper as CA), reticence, social shyness, unwillingness to communicate and its obverse, the willingness to communicate, or stage or speech fright. Much of the process of research was simplified by the use of the abstracts available in SilverPlatter, a CD-ROM index of CIJE.

1.1 Definitions

What is the cause of the difficulties? One study sought to discover the specific elements of public speaking courses that aroused anxiety:

> Grading options, speech preparation procedures, speaking order options, topic selection procedures, and administrative procedures were the types of instructional methods tested in the study. The results indicated that administration procedures (audience size, speech length) presented the most significant source of speech anxiety for communication apprehensive students. On the basis of these findings, apprehension about public speaking may be attributed to the process of speaking rather than the content of the speech or the skills of the speaker (Neer and others).

Obviously, individual students may have different answers, but my experience with students claiming difficulties suggests that audience size is rarely a major concern. Speech length can be, but often seems to be a complaint for my students concerned about "finding enough to say" or those concerned who think that their grade will be based on the amount of time they speak. In other words, there is no simple answer, as the well-known multiple conceptions of the problems should indicate.

Lynn Kelly argues that the study of the different concepts "reveals considerable overlap and few true distinctions" between them. However, in a more recent article, Leary "demonstrates that there are important conceptual distinctions among the constructs of reticence, shyness, communication apprehension, and unwillingness to communicate [and] argues that the failure to recognize the distinctions impedes research and precludes improved methods of identifying the problems and improving treatment." Whatever the merits of this dispute, this paper assumes that there are at least commonalities among the individuals who complain of difficulties in communication and in the interests of those who help them, and so chooses to deal with the whole scope of literature. But some definitions of the various concepts are desirable.

Broadest in coverage is the newest conceptualization of RETICENCE, which includes "people who do not communicate competently" (McCroskey, 1982). Broader than its original definition, this behavior-based definition subsumes both unwillingness and inability to communicate. One researcher

questions the concept, arguing that "the absence of behaviors correlating with reticence and the corresponding strong reticence/cognition relationship raises questions regarding the definition of the reticence construct and its operationalization" (Booth-Butterfield, "Behavioral").

Undoubtedly the most researched concept among the various approaches to the problem is COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION (McCroskey, 1970). Many institutions use one or another version of the Personalized Report of Communication Apprehension (PRCA) to screen individuals or confirm the extent of communication apprehension. Operationally, the concept assumes that communication apprehension is a trait-like concept that predisposes individuals to be anxious about oral communication in a variety of contexts. An article by Biggers and Masterson argues CA consists of a combination of low pleasure, high arousal, and low dominance in communication situations ("A Reconceptualization"). Based on his experience in an treatment program, Ambler suggests "for many, if not most of those enrolled in classes for 'speech anxious' students, there is some element of a more general trait tendency toward communication apprehension" (Ambler, "Communication" 8).

Despite its broad acceptance, there remain significant questions about the concept of communication apprehension. The first is the power of the "trait-like" concept. One study of dyadic communication settings suggested that "the effect of task and evaluation is systematically dependent on trait level within the individual" (Booth-Butterfield and Butterfield). On the other hand, McCroskey and others concluded "traitlike communication apprehension (CA) was found to be a modest predictor of a form of audience-based CA, while a situational component was much stronger" ("Apprehension"). Second, D. Thomas Porter has made an effort to test assumptions made by those researching the concept of communication apprehension by developing a competitive concept of EVALUATION APPREHENSION (EA), "a learned predisposition about how the threat of evaluation is managed in social interaction." Porter concludes that:

> The [six] studies revealed that EA predicted more variance than CA in a variety of criterion variables, including communication performance, student success, self-esteem, classroom proxemics, occupational preference, and rewards for communication. The results suggest that EA is more likely to be the true causal agent in stress reactions to communication than CA.

There are a host of related constructs or concepts which may also provide insights into the phenomena. STAGE FRIGHT has a long tradition of explanations which have been used to account for difficulties, especially for the activity of public speaking, e.g. Ayers. SHYNESS, a psychologically-based concept described

by one researcher as a "silent incarceration" (Bond), has been used to describe a set of symptoms among people unable "to talk when they need to or want to" (Phillips, 3). It is no accident that the concept closely parallels reticence: on the first page of his book, Phillips is able to explain that "we call shy people reticent because that word contains less social prejudice." McCroskey and Richmond examined the measures of communication apprehension and shyness in terms of their relationship and independence and found the two measures are empirically distinct from each other. Morris would seem to agree when observing that "shyness was more closely linked to timidity than to interaction anxiety and had relatively little to do with audience anxiety or stagefright." WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE is a "personality-based, trait-like predisposition which is fairly consistent across a variety of communication contexts and types of receivers." The concept is based on a self-report instrument which considers public speaking, talking in meetings, talking in small groups, and talking in dyads with three types of receivers -- strangers, acquaintances, and friends (McCroskey and Baer). Efforts to develop the concept, apparently the obverse of communication apprehension, include several papers by McCroskey and McCroskey. RHETORICAL SENSITIVITY is a measure of an individual's ability to understand and respond appropriately to a situation. In a study which linked the concept to communication apprehension, the authors concluded that "to be rhetorically sensitive is to be apprehensive of communication encounters. To be rhetorically insensitive is to be nonapprehensive" (Millar and Newton).

Concepts that may be well known among individuals less specifically tied to the speech communication community are WRITER'S BLOCK and WRITTEN COMMUNICATION APPREHENSION. In a recent monograph, Mike Rose defines writer's block as "an inability to begin or continue writing for reasons other than a lack of basic skill or commitment. . . . As defined here, writer's block is broader and subsumes writing apprehension as a possible cause of or reaction to blocking" (Rose, 3-4). Thus the relationship would seem to be that writing apprehension closely identifies with communication apprehension, while writer's block approximates reticence.

These comments suggest that there may indeed be important differences between these concepts and others which attempt to define and diagnose problems related to an individual's reluctance or inability to communicate (for examples of additional conceptions, see Bell or Ayres, "Perceptions"). In any approach to the perceived problems, it is worth considering that the abstract definition may come to be seen as a "real" thing, a reification which overlooks the specifics of the individual's difficulties in order to apply some general model of the problem with its clear pattern of treatment (Phillips, "Treatment/Training"). For the purposes of this paper, I simply

identify the specific terms used by the researchers in their work, leaving judgments about the possible connections or distinctions in effect to those more sophisticated writers and readers who would be interested in pursuing the specific findings of the research.

1.2 The Scope of the Problems

Although all of the constructs mentioned above suggest everyone has some difficulty with communication in some circumstances, assessments of the significance of the problem vary, depending on the measurement method employed and the population sampled. I already mentioned the Bruskin survey that reports over 40% of the population consider themselves afraid of speaking. Research on shyness agrees that about 40% consider themselves shy. Another survey found 40% of the students apprehensive about public speaking (McDowell). Other estimates of the proportion of populations experiencing difficulties include Phillips and Metzger's 1973 study which found 14% of elementary level, 24% of junior high school level and 12% of high school level students seen as "reduced in effectiveness" and Ambler's estimate that five percent of a university's students signed up for an apprehension treatment program ("The Speech").

The standard number given in a number of sources is that 20% of the college population have "high CA." Although this figure represents a standard bell curve applied to personal reports, it does not mean the level is a mere artifact of measurement. There does not appear to be a threshold or "acceptable" level of communication apprehension, and many would consider behaviors correlated to the "high CA" score to be major problems.

Significantly higher levels are found among groups within the general population, including women and individuals from other linguistic communities. McDowell finds significant differences occurred "(1) between males and females in rating the public and platform speaking dimension of the PRCA, and (2) among psychological sex groups in rating the three dimensions of the PRCA . . . with masculine and androgynous subjects rating the dimensions lower than feminine and undifferentiated subjects in all cases." The few studies of other populations, e.g. Payne & Richmond, or comparisons between populations, e.g. Pucel & Stocker, seem enough to indicate that while there are cultural distinctions in the severity of the problems, the phenomena are pancultural (Allen, O'Mara and Long, 3). At even greater disadvantage is the nonnative English speaker at an American educational institution (Allen and Andriate) and by extension, any individuals communicating with their second language

(Applbaum).

The significance of the problem can not be judged by numbers alone. McCroskey summarizes problems correlated with high communication apprehension:

> 1. People who experience a high level of CA will withdraw from and seek to avoid communication when possible.
> 2. As a result of their withdrawal from and avoidance of communication, people who experience a high level of CA will be perceived less positively than people who experience lower levels of CA by others in their environment.
> 3. As a result of their withdrawal and avoidance behaviors, and in conjunction with the negative perceptions fostered by those behaviors, people who experience a high level of CA will be negatively impacted in terms of their economic, academic, political, and social lives (McCroskey, "Oral," 85).

Apparently the individuals with high CA are aware of at least some of these impacts. One researcher used a Focus Group Interview technique and "found much of what high CAs said about themselves corresponds with what has been conceptualized and tested quantitatively about communication apprehension," especially in small groups (Lederman, "High" and "Suffering").

Though there are clear indications that the phenomena do not correlate with intelligence, studies agree that there are consequences in classrooms. Bowers suggests that the probability of occurrence of communication apprehension is influenced by the kind of classes, classrooms, and teachers. Others might grant the environmental influences, but generally conclude that "students high in communication apprehension (CA) spend less time talking than do students in low CA" (Beatty and others). Also, "the more anxious a person is when communicating verbally, the more inhibited the person will be when communicating nonverbally" (Hensley). These and other observerable consequences have negative implications. For example, in a beginning public speaking course, "student evaluators perceived people reporting high levels of communication apprehension as speaking too softly, providing long pauses for no apparent reason, having a shaking voice, apologizing for their message, not responding to their audience, blushing, and having trembling hands. They also evaluated high communication apprehensives more negatively than their peers, seeing them as less credible, less attractive, less likely to influence opinions, and less effective in communication" (Pearson and Turner). Of particular interest to basic courses which include some sort of group work, Millar and Yerby found "communication apprehension appeared as the best predictor of task leadership, with lack of apprehension leading to behavior perceived by others as leadership." And the results of apprehension are not limited to communication courses:

"Students [in a bioethics course] with high speech anxiety interacted less with instructors and did not achieve as well as other students" (Boohar and Seiler).

The consequences for students are explored in a preliminary report of McCroskey and Payne's research. They conclude that "high apprehensives were approximately 29% more likely to leave school before the end of the first semester and 37% more likely to leave in the first two years than were those with low apprehension. High communication apprehensives achieved lower grade-point averages and earned slightly fewer credits than did those with low apprehension, for each of the semesters studied."

These findings and others should be enough to convince nearly anyone that individuals who experience difficulty in communication have serious problems. Every article I examined assumes the problems deserve treatment of some sort. What is being done?

1.3 Approaches to Communication Apprehension

The consensus of the research suggests the answer is "not much." Hoffman and Sprague report that only 6.8% (58 of 847) responding institutions had special programs of any sort. Foss found 8.4% (22 of 262 responding schools), though she cautions she had a low response rate and her results may not be representative. Rubin and others surveyed the use of assessment procedures in higher education. Of 384 speech communication departments, only 45 (11.7%) reported using large-scale, uniform testing of students for any purpose, including the detection of CA or related difficulties.

In some ways, the problem is easy to ignore. Many students unable or unwilling to speak avoid optional communication courses. If a requirement exists, it will likely be taught by lower level faculty or teaching assistants who may lack the influence to establish the budget and programmatic priorities of a department. The student suffering from the problem is not likely to speak up. The combination of benign neglect and a lack of protest allows some administrators to conclude this is not a significant problem. And there is hostility to establishing special programs. Phillips describes camps of opposition to the Pennsylvania State reticence program:

> Some academics objected because they felt the course was a "Mickey Mouse" way of escaping a requirement. Others were insulted, for they believed themselves able to cope with problem speakers in their classrooms. A third group simply

did not believe students could have such problems (Phillips, xii).

The University of Iowa might provide an example of such institutional attitudes. Nearly all freshmen and transfer students with less than forty hours are required to take one or more of the courses offered by the Rhetoric Program, combining instruction in speaking, writing and reading. Within each class, the Program expects students to complete five to eight speeches. For many years before the Program set up the Speaking Lab in 1984, there apparently was no systematic instruction to raise awareness of communication apprehension or suggest strategies to the staff. Apparently, most instructors used the most popular method of "treating" the problem: have the student stand up and speak. McCroskey clarifies the probable consequences of this approach:

> For people with high CA such experiences are worthless at best, harmful in most instances, and deeply traumatic in many. . . . [On one PRCA measurement] although over half of the students who were identified as having high CA dropped the course before the end of the term, the remaining students with high CA showed a significant increase in CA . . . . [T]hose in most need of help were actually hurt (McCroskey, "Oral" 90-91).

Because Iowa would only allow students to drop the course under the most extreme circumstances, some instructors tried to alleviate the harm by allowing broad options in the type of performance or modifying grading policies. Unfortunately, there is no evidence from the Rhetoric Program and little in the literature that any such methods reduced anxiety, improved the student's self-concept, or helped increase communication skills, e.g. Romero. Others referred their students to a Counseling Center, hoping that another agency would be able to help, only to find their students reluctant to attend and the help offered of limited extent and utility (McKiernan, 10).

Once programs decide on some method other than ignoring the problem or attempting to simply force students with difficulties through the speaking experience, there are primarily two approaches to the problems faced by students: those centered on lessening anxiety about speaking and those centered on increasing speaking skills. The next sections briefly describe styles within each approach and then offer comparisons of their effectiveness.

1.3.1 Anxiety-based definitions

Perhaps the most widely used approach is the use of some variant of cognitive modification. Fremouw and Scott summarize a

variety of specific techniques used. In short, subjects are taught to monitor their thoughts, to identify the thoughts which interfere with comfortable or capable communication, to assess the impact of the thought on their behaviors, and to alter or limit the comments. Those selecting this approach assume

> that a substantial reason for the experience of apprehension while communicating is the failure of the individual to engage in thinking which is functional to getting the task accomplished. In the case of cognitive restructuring as suggested by Meichenbaum (1977), there is an assumption that persons high in communication apprehension engage in "task irrelevant" thoughts. . . . In the case of rational-emotive therapy as practiced by Ellis (1962), it is assumed that the individual who is high in communication apprehension tends to engage in thinking which is based on what Ellis refers to as "irrational beliefs" (Ambler and Elkins, 1).

In either case, individual perception is key, so objective measures of ability presumably mean little and students with any level of skill may find such internal statements interfering with their perceived optimal performance.

Interestingly, despite many programs' reliance on and apparent success from this approach, Ambler and Elkins claim:

> there is not a body of firmly grounded empirical data to substantiate these assumptions. . . . Moreover, the studies which have demonstrated the effectiveness of rational-emotive therapy in reducing speech anxiety or communication apprehension . . . did not test for the level of irrational beliefs present in their subjects prior to the training or after the training, thus leaving the central question of what accounted for the reduction in communication apprehension or speech anxiety open to interpretation (Ambler and Elkins 1).

Apparently, only Ambler and Elkins' 1986 study supports the common assumption that students high in apprehension engage in greater amounts of irrational thinking, but even it "does not affirm an especially strong relationship between irrational beliefs and CA" (10).

Furthermore, there is no clear relationship between the reduction in the self-report of apprehension and an improvement in performance as judged by outside observers.

> A study was conducted to investigate the effects of audiotaped counterattitudinal messages (messages counter to a person's irrational beliefs that are designed to help change negative attitudes) on communication. . . . The results from the PRPSA revealed significant differences

between the experimental and control groups for treatment effect. The second posttest results indicated that the positive impact of the treatment not only continued but increased. The results from the observer-rated anxiety scores of the BASA revealed no significant differences between the experimental and control groups in any of the four factors for the overall estimate of anxiety (Romero).

A second anxiety-based approach uses the psychological technique of systematic desensitization. Described by McCroskey's 1972 article, "The Implementation of a Large-scale Program of Systematic Desensitization for Communication Apprehension," practitioners teach some relaxation technique and then encourage the individual to use the relaxation response when the thought of the situation develops anxiety. Relaxation is thought to act as an inhibitor for anxiety, so in preparation sessions, students are encouraged to consciously relax, then visualize a sequence of steps involved in preparation and delivery of a speech. When the thought of a step disturbs the relaxed state, speakers are encouraged to consciously relax. The process continues until the student can imagine the entire event and remain relaxed.

Visualization is a third anxiety-based approach to combat CA. First described in a Communication Education article (Ayers and Hopf, "Visualization: A Means"), the authors suggest "asking speakers to imagine themselves making an effective presentation." The power of students imagining themselves in a stress producing situation and still successfully accomplishing their objectives is effective in reducing communication apprehension (c.f. Rossi and Todd-Mancillas). Furthermore, the technique can be used as part of a normal classroom routine. Ayers and Hopf's comparative follow-up study found significant effects from each of the three approaches to remediation tested, with PRCA-24 change scores of 17.2 for a type of cognitive modification, 16.1 for systematic desensitization, and 14.5 for visualization compared to 3.9 for the control group (13). Statistical analysis indicates "visualization was as effective in reducing communication anxiety as either rational emotive therapy or systematic desensitization" (Ayers and Hopf, "Visualization, Systematic Desensitization" 8-9).

1.3.2 Skills-based definitions

Distinct from all of the previous anxiety-based approaches to the problems, skills training assumes difficulties with communication are problems of inadequate skills. The most active and influential advocate of this approach is Gerald Phillips, head of Pennsylvania State University's Reticence Program. Specific tactics vary widely, even within any single program, but include "direct instruction and coaching of target behaviors,

modeling, goal setting, covert rehearsal, behavior rehearsal, in vivo practice, and self-monitoring" (Glazer, 332). Almost all speech classes intentionally include some or most of these tactics, so perhaps even those I labelled as ignoring the problem could be placed within this category. While there are obviously large differences among the various programs which use these methods, various studies suggest that they are equal to or more effective than other methods in reducing the communication difficulties they target (i.e., Taugher). However, there is one assessment which compared skills training, systematic desensitization, and cognitive modification and flatly concludes that "to reduce avoidance of communication situations and to produce actual behavioral change, ST [skills training] is the treatment of choice. . . . [O]nly ST appears to produce concomitant change in actual communication behavior" (Glazer, 337).

Of course, combinations of the approaches to the problems are possible and may be inevitable. Individual programs have experimented with various combinations and applied them to various specific types of individuals. Presumably, even those programs which claim to adhere to one method may, intentionally or not, allow for some other form of development in individual cases. It makes sense that if students improve communication skills, they will recognize the improvement and consequently alter cognitive statements or become more relaxed in the situation, adding skills training to cognitive modification or systematic desensitization. Or those who go through a process of systematic desensitization may, in the development of their imaginary process, gain cues which will actually improve their invention and disposition processes.

There are reported distinctions in effectiveness based on various schemas for dividing those who have problems. For example, Watson reports results which show:

> The therapy [combining anxiety reduction and skill development] appears to be highly effective with subjects who report more generalized, cross-situational speech anxiety, while systematic desensitization appears to be primarily effective with subjects for whom speech anxiety is confined to formal speaking situations (Watson "Confidence").

Ambler and Elkins, in a post analysis of results, suggest there is a distinction between males and females which suggests that females probably would benefit from some approach other than cognitive modification (10-11).

Though there has not been extensive comparative research of various approaches to the reduction of anxiety, those which have been done indicate that there are approximately even results in

the reduction of anxiety, with systematic desensitization and cognitive modification holding a slight but not statistically significant edge (Weissberg and Lamb; Ayers and Hopf, "Visualization, Systematic"). Watson and Dodd compared three modes of treatment: skills training with rational-emotive therapy (a form of cognitive modification), skills training and systematic desensitization, and skills training alone. "All three showed significant decreases in speech anxiety after the four-month program [and] no group's results differed significantly from any of the others" (Watson and Dodd). Glazer's article is the only indication I have seen that there is a distinction on measured performance differences, but that definite opinion corresponds with my experience in the Iowa Speaking Lab. Importantly, no matter what a program might consist of, the consensus of the research is clearly that something is significantly better than nothing.

1.4 Applications Relevant to the Basic Course

The following suggestions are made in primarily four areas. The first is resources for additional education, providing added specific suggestions for individuals wishing to develop an understanding of the problem and equip themselves with additional specific resources for developing, leading, counseling, or teaching individuals with difficulties in communicating. The second suggests various specific suggestions for improving the instruction of students in an individualized context. Third, I cover those approaches which have a restriction that selects a particular type of problem to deal with. Finally, I synthesize suggestions that apply to the "typical" basic course, with an undifferentiated student body.

1.4.1 Training for Educators

Obviously, all of the resources mentioned in this paper may be of some use to the professional seeking specific assistance. However, for an overview of the extent of the problem, I would suggest McCroskey's "Classroom Consequences of Communication Apprehension" (Communication Education, 26 (1977) 27-33). For an extremely lucid yet technically sophisticated examination of treatment options, I would recommend Glazer's "Oral Communication Apprehension and Avoidance: The Current Status of Treatment Research" (Communication Education, 30 (1981) 321-341). For detailed advice about actually working with those who have difficulties in communicating, I would recommend turning to several sources: Gerald Phillips, Help for Shy People and Anyone Else Who Ever Felt Ill at Ease on Entering a Room Full of

Strangers (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1981); Arden Watson, "Alleviation of Communication Apprehension: An Individualized Approach," Texas Speech Communication Journal, 11 (1986), 3-14; and Phillip Zimbardo, Shyness: What It Is and What To Do About It (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1977).

Efforts similar to this paper that I would recommend include Roy M. Berko, "How Can We Deal with the Underprepared and Communicative Apprehensive Oral Communication Student at the College Level?"; John Daly, "Communication Apprehension in the College Classroom"; Karen Foss, "Communication Apprehension: Resources for the Instructor"; Eugene Tate, "A Guided Design Unit on Communication Apprehension, Reticence and Shyness"; and William Work, "ERIC Report: On Communication Apprehension: Everything You've Wanted to Know But Have Been Afraid to Ask."

On-going information about this subject can be gained by subscribing to the Communication Apprehension and Avoidance Newsletter, available by contacting Arden K. Watson, The Pennsylvania State University/Delaware County Campus, 25 Yearsley Mill Road, Media, PA 19063.

Given that there is some effort among professionals to educate themselves, the choice then comes down to how to help those with the problems described by this paper. The next portion of the paper describes the three general approaches used and arguments for and against each.

1.4.2 Individualized Treatment

Miller, describing the problems from the perspective of impression management, argues that "social anxiety is produced by an interaction of situational and personal characteristics; this suggests that there is no one specific treatment for all victims of social anxiety, but that a variety and combination of treatment modalities, e.g. cognitive therapy, or social skills training, should be used, as required, for each individual." This is the basic rationale in support of a decision to work with individuals on their problems. Arden Watson suggests an approach for individualizing programs for the alleviation of communication apprehension in an article in Texas Speech Communication Journal. Growing out of her experience with a course designed to allow individuals to fulfill requirements for the basic speech course, the process includes an initial meeting and assessment, an analysis of the problem(s), and an assignment to one or more tracks of treatment. The three tracks are reasonable thinking, systematic desensitization, and a specific form of skills training called goal setting. The results of this approach appear "quite positive," with post-test PRCA-24 showing a 25% improvement, students reporting increased ability to communicate, and teachers commenting on "increased interaction in class and

improved verbal skills" (Watson, "Alleviation" 8). One such program has been set up within a University Retention Program (Brownell and Watson). Another is part of the University of Iowa's Rhetoric Program (McKiernan).

The approach allows the advantage of direct interaction between the person with problems and the trained counselor or teacher. In most circumstances, it seems likely that the possibility of effective intervention is increased, allowing the greatest probability of helping with the least likelihood of alienating or antagonizing the individual with communication problems. My experience in working with the University of Iowa's program also seemed to confirm that students would be willing to meet and talk with an individual, but they were often reluctant to discuss the problems with a group present, even if the other members of the group experienced similar problems.

One constraint which will limit the adoption of this sort of program is the inherent perceived inefficiencies of the approach. Trained individuals can devote their time to a limited number of individual contacts. While many students and most instructors would appreciate the advantages of one-to-one contact, current educational practices rarely will allow such apparent luxury. For nearly everyone, there are informal and formal institutional guidelines on how time may be best spent, with the general consensus being that individual attention is too costly. Some institutions begrudge limiting a performance class to twenty-five or even thirty students; imagine their reaction if someone recommended spending a substantial portion of time with a single student.

In addition, there are a number of possible disadvantages to the approach. First, in many situations, the only trained individual might be involved in multiple roles with the student. If the basic problem is related to a fear of evaluation and the counselor also serves as an evaluator of the student's efforts, then the apparent conflict of roles could reduce the effectiveness of the interaction. Second, if a program is large enough to avoid that sort of difficulty, it may fall prey to another: having a "specialist" working with some individuals who complain about problems can provide a incentive for self diagnosis of problems. Without some sort of checking mechanism, it is conceivable that the specialist may become overloaded, smothered by the referrals generated by the success of those helped. Third, if the help offered is limited in some way, there may be student or staff complaints about the "unfair" assistance being provided for some and not for others, especially in situations where students are apparently competing against each other for grades. While none of these disadvantages are inevitable or an absolute reason to avoid the individualized approach, these and other factors must be considered before choosing this option.

1.4.3 Special Groups

Instead of working with individuals, many programs have opted to set up small groups as either alternatives or supplements to the standard basic course. One such approach is developed in Watson's Confidence Model, a class combining anxiety reduction and skill development.

> After students are screened by interviews and self-report inventories, they describe their perception of particular oral communication needs in a conference, and the teacher and student then plan communication goals. During the course, the student has the choice of the number and type of speech activities to be accomplished and determines the amount of progress and the semester grade he or she wishes to pursue. The course begins with a discussion of the variables affecting oral communication and is then divided into six parts: (1) rational thinking, (2) goal setting, (3) social conversation, (4) interviewing, (5) group discussion, and (6) public speaking (Watson, "Confidence").

Another approach is "making the course separate from the speech department -- noncredit, not graded, and without a speech requirement" (Cohen).

Four elements of these approaches deserve special comment and consideration of some of the alternatives possible. First, Watson screens students before admitting them to the program, using both interviews and a self-report. Other programs choose to use only one or the other, or, as Cohen reports, to dispense with the need for qualifying the students altogether, allowing them to choose whether to attend or not. Obviously, the choice of using a self-report inventory such as the PRCA depends primarily on the decision of its worth. The time involved is negligible and the instrument can be administered inexpensively. The instrument is reliable, but a decision on its validity or desirability are more clearly based on the presuppositions of the decisionmaker. Considering the potential for being overloaded, the interview as a basis for screening seems less objectionable. Few professionals would want a student to become involved in an optional program without at least understanding it. If resources dictate that only a limited number of students can become involved, most would agree that a method to determine those whose need is greatest and who may be able to benefit most is desirable. The only drawback I sense to the interview is the potential for individual bias to play too great a role, and such abuse can be countered in a variety of ways.

A second set of options deserving comment concerns who is to lead the small group. Watson's Confidence Model uses a faculty

member with special training. Paul Friedman, at the University of Kansas, uses the situation as a basis for teaching graduate students consulting skills, then lets them work with individuals or small groups. The University of Tennessee (Knoxville) reports using faculty and graduate students from several departments and staff from the counseling services center (Ambler "Speech"). Another alternative is to have students develop and run the class on communication apprehension. One small rural college allowed a senior communication major with relatively high apprehension to develop a course for six other students based on cognitive modification. This was not a formal study, but the authors note that results of a PRCA post-test showed substantial improvement for all individuals except the one who developed the course. They also mention that this is an inexpensive approach for such colleges to take (Greenstreet and Hoover).

Third, some programs develop alternative approaches to grading. While Watson establishes a contract and Cohen's program does not give grades, the University of Illinois offers "stage fright sections [which] differ from others in the basic speech course in that students self-select them [and] only 'satisfactory'/'unsatisfactory' grades are given" (Bozik). While intuition suggests there may be an impact, my research did not find a single study of the relationship between various grading schemes and communication apprehension.

Fourth, programs can be as broad as Watson's or select more limited topics for discussion. Pennsylvania State's special sections for reticent students teaches students "to change their views of themselves as communicators and of the act of communication through material on communication principles, goal analysis papers, goal reports, audience and situation analysis instruction for all types of situations, and discussion of public speaking as extended conversation" (Kelly, "Treating"). Courses may also focus on specific contexts other than public speaking. One program focuses on conversational skills, teaching students to "develop comfortable and effective social behavior in a variety of interpersonal contexts" (Glazer and others).

One approach to limiting topics that is fairly widespread is the establishment of English as a Second Language (ESL) courses. While perhaps not immediately recognizable as an example of a small group relevant to this paper's concern for those experiencing communication difficulties, there are a number of courses which attempt to develop students' abilities before they get into the basic communication course. These individuals often continue to have problems after completing such a course. Allen, O'Mara and Long claim:

> Faculty frequently criticized international students' lack of language proficiency, deficient communication skills, reticence in the classroom, and cliquish social behavior.

> While Americans ideally profess to being unbiased and tolerant of cultural differences, in actuality intercultural relationships in the U.S. are marred by suspicion and lack of understanding caused to a large extent by the judgment that nonnative English speakers are ineffective communicators -- both verbally and nonverbally -- when interacting with U.S. educators, students, and citizens generally (Allen, O'Mara and Long, 1-2).

My experience at the University of Iowa suggested that ESL students were among the most common users of the Speaking Lab, and several others I have spoken to suggest that they find ESL students to have significant levels of apprehension about communicating in a required basic course. The source of the apprehension is not always the perceived lack of competency in English. Sometimes, there is an underlying personal or cultural difficulty with communication. "CA in a second language is usually going to be higher than CA in the native, first language, and, even in those few instances when CA is not significantly higher in the second language, it is not likely to be any lower" (Allen, O'Mara and Long, 4). If this description holds up, the effort of an ESL class to develop abilities in English may be limited by the individual student's apprehension. "[I]increased competence in English would not reduce CA past the baseline established in the native language" (Allen, O'Mara and Long, 17).

What this means for the basic course is that even after completion of an ESL course, there may be a significant amount of apprehension remaining among ESL students. The implications of apprehension have been described above and there does not seem to be any reason to doubt that negative impacts occur less frequently among ESL students. One study of nonnative English speakers concluded:

> When it came to learning outcomes, high and moderate CAs indicated less liking for the practices and skills taught than did low CAs. . . . Increasing amounts of CA definitely impact affect for communication practices recommended in the course. Moreover, there was no significant difference among high, moderate, and low CAs when it came to affect for course content, suggesting nonnative English speakers don't mind studying the content [sic] of the communication course, but they do not like putting it into practice (Allen, O'Mara and Long, 19-20).

In order to overcome these sorts of reactions, Lucas "suggests and explains classroom techniques designed to alleviate this anxiety and to promote and practice communication."

Providing this sort of additional work may be especially helpful for those schools with large populations of nonnative English speakers. Of course, there are a number of issues

surrounding this sort of special grouping. The issues of prejudice against individuals or groups, of seeming to patronize, and of adding to the pressures of isolation from mainstream students need careful consideration before making a commitment to act. "Turf" battles between administrative units in an institution may occur, especially if there are significant resource limitations which apparently preclude any effort beyond the already established ESL courses. Despite the potential difficulties, a large number of those attending the Basic Course workshop in Salt Lake City seemed to consider the needs of ESL students to be especially pressing.

1.4.4 Basic Course Classes

For various reasons, in some situations individualized treatment and small groups concerned with communication difficulties are impossible or more difficult than seem worthwhile. In these cases, instructors might consider what can be done within the "normal" basic course structure to aid students with communication difficulties. The following suggestions are by no means exhaustive: inventive and innovative instructors can without doubt find additional approaches which will provide their students with significant learning opportunities.

Perhaps the best news is that almost any sort of course seems to have some positive effects. Two studies by Stacks and Stone found that oral communication courses "(1) produced significant reduction in a student's communication apprehension scores; (2) yielded more positiveness about self-disclosure; and (3) reduced discrepancies between self-concepts and ideal self-concepts" ("An Examination"). "Findings indicated also that the type of speech course [public speaking, interpersonal communication, or small group communication which all required oral presentations] did not significantly affect apprehension" (Stacks and Stone, "The Effect"). While not consistent with McCroskey's opinion that when those with high communication apprehension were forced to speak their level of apprehension actually increased, the studies agree with most of the other material which suggests that skills training can reduce communication apprehension. In this section, I will point out specific course elements which may contribute to the desired goal of greater confidence and competence.

First, I recommend that every class have a discussion about or explanation of apprehension early in the course, pointing out that most people have some anxious moments in a new communication situation of any sort. One helpful tactic may be to have students individually complete a Communication Anxiety Graph to pinpoint areas of the speaking process which create anxiety (Brownell and Katula). Once students recognize the anxiety, an

instructor can more readily point out that there are ways to use anxiety to motivate preparation for the communicative act. Also, point out that most audiences are concerned for the speaker and want a successful completion of the communication.

Second, as an instructor I remind myself that public speaking, especially in a academic course, is not "natural." I try to make sure the students know what is expected, have the opportunity to learn the skills called for, and are evaluated on the announced criteria. The importance of such goals is supported by Melanie Booth-Butterfield, who concludes "the communication of high CAs was disrupted by evaluation, but less so if task structure provided guidance" ("Stifle"). One approach to provide such guidance is known as Personalized System of Instruction (PSI).

> Based on behavioristic psychology, PSI stresses mastery learning, self-pacing, the written word, student proctors, and lectures that motivate rather than just supply essential information. . . . Results indicated that students in the PSI sections reported higher levels of perceived learning, higher overall satisfaction with course content and format, lower levels of communication apprehension, and higher cognitive retention of course material than did students in the traditionally taught course sections (Buerkel-Rothfuss and Yerby).

Another comparison between PSI and the lecture-recitation format also found PSI more effective in alleviating communication apprehension (Gray and others). While adoption of PSI would depend on much more than its effect on communication apprehension, many of its methods could certainly become a part of nearly any course.

Development of various instructional techniques, whether based on PSI or on some other approach, would seem likely to significantly help those who are apprehensive about communication. My own experience suggests that there are significant advantages in allowing students to select their own topics, work with each other, and define their own emphasis for evaluation. Selecting something which they know and care about and actually have talked about in some other setting often seems to provide a basis for confidence in their ability to speak, significantly improving their enthusiasm and performance quality. Providing time for students to work with other students on their speeches is another approach appreciated by students. I find it necessary to encourage those responding to focus on more than mechanics of delivery, but once students recognize that their comments on content, organization or delivery can significantly improve the quality of a speech, thus helping one of their "colleagues" succeed on an assignment and enhancing their own understanding of how the communication process can be

altered to meet a goal, they actively seek out the chance to be involved in the construction of a speech. Allowing students to help set the basis for their own evaluation allows them the chance to recognize their strengths and weaknesses. On selected assignments, I announce areas for evaluation and ask the individual student to determine the priority given to each within a set percentage range (usually 20-40% for four categories). Obviously, most select a grading scheme to maximize their strengths. The process allows many speakers to become less concerned with evaluation of their perceived shortcomings and thus to reduce their apprehension. Furthermore, the student's awareness of his or her own strengths as a speaker is often a valuable lesson which allows better selection of speaking occasions and topics after the public speaking course is completed.

Others have found that allowing students to approach their task using different media is desirable. Greene suggests that assigning a "radio reading proved to be particularly advantageous for the apprehensive students since the audience was invisible." Osenlund describes "a nonthreatening method for introducing videotaping to a speech class by allowing students to construct videotaped projects, such as news programs or interviews in groups."

Third, I encourage students in the audience to consider the speeches as real communicative acts, not just a performance for a grade. I have them ask questions about the content if they are interested and allow enough time for discussions which might come from the topics of the speeches. Such an approach is advantageous, as the following statement concerning the writing process attests:

> Emphasizing the writing process rather than the product -- stressing peer and teacher responses to writing instead of graded teacher evaluations, for example -- establishes a supportive classroom atmosphere, thereby reducing general negative attitudes toward writing (Lally and others).

Students may profit from ungraded speeches early in the semester, though such a move might also diminish their motivation to excel.

Finally, after speeches are given in class, the instructor and the class should focus on reinforcing the good by praising what is excellent. For anxious students, it is especially important to avoid critical remarks in front of the entire class. One evaluation technique which seems to have beneficial effect on apprehension is the use of a post-speech conference between the instructor and each student. Croft, reporting on his study of 74 undergraduate students enrolled in an adult elective speech course, reports:

> The Personal Report of Public Speaking Anxiety was used concurrently with follow-up student conferences after speech performances. Students completed a questionnaire describing their performance feelings and feedback immediately following two speech assignments, and then met with the instructor in conference to discuss the questionnaire responses. . . . Of the total, 25 students lowered their anxiety score by two levels, 5 by three levels, and 2 by four levels; 20 did not change their level from pre-test to post-test . . . (Croft).

Another evaluation technique is the use of videotape to allow students to observe themselves. Some research indicates "video feedback focuses attention on self and magnifies communication performance difficulties and so might increase fear of communication, reinforce negative self-perceptions, and further reduce self-esteem and expectations of success in communication. Stress reactions to video feedback have been found in a few studies" (Kinzer). Others say videotaping and self-confrontation "appeared to inhibit the reduction of apprehension" (Newburger and Daniel). These results lead Daniel to claim that "speech teachers should use videotaping cautiously in beginning courses. Student skills are more likely to be enhanced in advanced elective courses where the levels of communication apprehension are generally lower." On the other hand, some instructors find significant advantages in the use of videotaping. One instructor uses videotape without grading the effort being recorded and says "as students come to realize that the videotape captures their entire effort, they see and discover patterns that no amount of oral or written criticism could possibly communicate. Free from a concern about grades, students can cope with their fear and focus on those characteristics necessary for an effective oral report" (Glossner). Another allowed students to make the choice of taping their first speech or not, finding "no apprehensive students who videotaped their speeches withdrew from class, compared to 22 apprehensive non-videotapers who did withdraw" (Foley). In my own experience, students initially express slightly higher apprehension about being recorded, but nearly all emerge from viewing themselves with a more positive impression, saying such things as "I didn't look as nervous as I felt." I agree with Lake and Adams, who after considering the potential for harm and mitigating elements which may be a part of the classroom environment, conclude "the videotape recorder could be used effectively as an instructional feedback tool without fear of serious negative effects on speaker performance or on the emotional condition of students."

1.5 Conclusion

As I said earlier in this paper, it is clear that there is a problem of widespread proportions, especially among students expected to become liberally educated by taking a course requiring public speaking. Although this paper covers a variety of approaches and techniques to help those with this problem, they are by no means the only ones available. Others are introduced at conferences and in the growing literature on this topic. No single approach will work all of the time. No one approach is best for all people in all situations. But by recognizing the problem and admitting that our profession's attention and methods have not yet been enough to reach our goals, perhaps we will be motivated to continue our efforts and refine our tactics to come closer to the elusive goal of overcoming our students' apprehension in order to allow them to exercise their freedom of speech.

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